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BROWNBACK PUSHES STRONG AG TRADE AGENDA FOR WTO TALKS

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Congressional Caucus for Farmers and Ranchers, spoke today at a news conference where the caucus members outlined agriculture trade goals for U.S. negotiators at the upcoming WTO talks in Seattle.

“As Congress looks at ways to improve the current agriculture economy, it is vital that government fight for free trade and to open markets so that American producers have a fair playing field,” Brownback said. “The upcoming round of WTO negotiations in Seattle is a vital opportunity to move this important issue forward.

“This bi-partisan group has been working hard to focus our trade agenda. It is heartening that so many of us from such diverse political perspectives have agreed on these agriculture trade priorities. This sends a strong message to our foreign trading partners,” Brownback said.

PRIORITIES: Areas of strong focus in the next trade round are:

Eliminating illegal sanitary/phytosanitary regulations that block U.S. exports (hormone beef ban for example). The WTO must focus on the issue of genetically-modified crops. It is vital to promote science-based decision-making and enforcement measures on trade issues.

Eliminating the unfair subsidization of foreign crops, especially European subsidies. The focus here should be to make government support more equal across the board as opposed to an agreement on overall reduction. This means tearing down EU subsidies which outpace the U.S. almost 3-to-1.

Reforming state trading enterprises (STEs) to remove the ability of such enterprises to make political rather than economic decisions on imports. This is an issue in which Sen. Brownback has been active on in the past, and which will be a major issue in Seattle.

The WTO negotiations begin in Seattle on November 30.